

ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE INFORMATION SHEET

Tennessee code, 63-7-126, adopted 2002, requires nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, nurse anesthetists and clinical nurse specialists to apply for state board of nursing APN certification. APNs must maintain RN licensure in TN or a compact state (if permanent state of residence is a compact state). APNs who hold a master's degree or higher in a clinical nursing specialty and national professional nursing certification in the appropriate (same) nursing specialty and also meet the pharmacology (3 quarter hours or its equivalent) and specialized practitioner skills requirement (master's degree or higher) are eligible for an APN certificate with certificate of fitness. There is no longer a separate certificate of fitness document or separate number.

After July 1, 2005 applicants for an APN certificate who do not hold a master's degree in nursing are not eligible for a Tennessee advanced practice nurse certificate and therefore will not be eligible to represent themselves or practice as a nurse anesthetist, clinical nurse specialist, nurse midwife and/or nurse practitioner.

All holders of a certificate of fitness were "converted" to APN status without the requirement to pay the initial certification fee of \$210. New applicants will pay this fee. The previous certificate of fitness fee was \$200. The extra \$10 is a state regulatory fee required by law.

Nurse anesthetists are required to apply for an APN certificate. Those nurse anesthetists applying by July 1, 2005 are exempt from the requirement to hold a master's degree in nursing. After July 1, 2005 nurse anesthetist applicants for APN must hold a master's degree in nursing regardless of when educated or state of residence. Nurse anesthetist APNs may apply for prescription writing privileges under the same requirements as the other categories of APNs. An APN certificate is sufficient for "regular" nurse anesthesia practice; however, a CRNA who writes and signs prescriptions (for example, pain management) must hold an APN certificate with certificate of fitness.

APNs must renew *both* their APN certificate and their RN license. The renewal applications are separate. One may renew online up to 120 days prior to the expiration date or by mail. The APN renewal fee is \$100. This is in addition to the RN renewal fee of \$75. Both renewal and change of address may be made online at Tennessee.gov/health, click on license renewal. Remember to change address in both professions (APN/RN). Note: name changes are handled same as always: fax legal document that changes name to 615-741-7899, note both RN license # and APN certificate #.

Fees go to support the services provided to the profession. APNs may not be aware that regulation of advanced practice is more costly than basic practice. First, the application is more complicated to review. APN applications are reviewed by a nurse and/or designated administrative staff. Second, the applicant's questions are more likely to need a response by a registered nurse rather than clerical staff. Complaints filed against advanced practice nurses are more complicated to investigate and sometimes require the use of outside nurse experts to review the file and/or to serve as a witness. APN fees offset the greater cost of regulating advanced practice rather than spreading that cost among all RNs and LPNs.

Some have asked the question, "What advantage is there to a separate APN certificate?" First, this law brings Tennessee into the mainstream of recognizing APN practice as separate from RN practice. It makes Tennessee eligible for the APN compact if passed by the legislature. The law codifies the broader, more contemporary terminology; "advanced practice nurse," rather than the more narrow term "nurse practitioner." An APN could possibly have the APN certificate disciplined, but maintain the RN license. This is a great advantage in that the individual has a profession (RN) which provides a means to make a living while remediating or rehabilitating in terms of the APN certificate. For most APNs, this scenario will never be an issue, but for those that it does affect, it can be valuable insurance. Of course, there are circumstances where both licenses may be disciplined (untreated chemical dependence, for example).

Another frequently asked question is "How do I sign my name?" The legal title authorized in the statute is "advanced practice nurse." The rules allow for the use of the initials, "APN." In addition to the APN title, also use the legal designation "RN." It is a best practice of regulation that consistency in nomenclature protects the public. It is recommended that the advanced practice nurse use the title "APN" to promote understanding and consistency for the public. Other academic and professional titles are not addressed in the nursing law and may be used as appropriate.